

John Kerry Proposes Investments in Palestine While Funding Israeli Apartheid, Main Obstacle to Commerce

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As U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry attempts to put his particular spin on resolving the generations-old crisis of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, he has travelled to the World Economic Forum. There he waved the possibility of \$4 billion investments in the Palestinian economy, from a worldwide conglomerate of investors, over a period of three years. Of course, he hasn't specified who these investors would be. It was reported that "... Kerry did not identify specific companies with plans to set up shop in the West Bank or how he hoped to remove obstacles to Palestinian commerce."

The U.S. government in 2013 will give Israel over \$3.15 billion, an increase over the billions it gave Israel last year. Yet the U.S. doesn't ever seem to have any problem determining where that money comes from: the U.S. taxpayer has for decades been funding the apartheid state of Israel.

Regarding removing obstacles to Palestinian commerce, perhaps we could take a look at what some of those obstacles are.

*Israel has established countless checkpoints all over the West Bank. Customers wanting to get to stores that may be a few blocks from their home may have to travel miles to get to them, because IDF (Israel Defense Forces) soldiers arbitrarily close checkpoints whenever the mood so strikes them. Or, they might leave a checkpoint open, but prevent people from passing through by asking countless questions, demanding assorted identification, or simply telling them they have to wait until the soldiers are good and ready to speak to them. That could be today, or possibly, tomorrow. Or maybe the day after. And if a potential customer decides to try a different route, through a different checkpoint, there is no guarantee the response there will be any different. Merchants attempting to get to their own stores face the same checkpoints and challenges.

*Farmers need to plant seeds, irrigate crops, care for them and eventually harvest them. This becomes difficult when they require permits from Israel to plant and harvest on their own land. A Palestinian farmer may request a permit to plant during planting season, but be granted the permit only long after planting season has passed. If he or she is fortunate enough to be given permission to plant at the appropriate time of year, he/she must simply hope that permission to harvest will be granted when appropriate. It is not unusual for Israel to grant permission to a Palestinian farmer to harvest his/her crops long after they have spoiled in the field.

*If a farmer is sufficiently lucky to be permitted to plant and harvest on his/her own land at an appropriate time, the challenges do not end. Once the crops are harvested and loaded onto vehicles to be taken to market, the checkpoints challenge is then faced. Often, farmers are delayed so long by IDF soldiers at checkpoints that their produce spoils before they are allowed to pass through.

*Israel has built an excellent road system all over the West Bank. Unfortunately, Palestinians aren't allowed to use those roads. If a new Israeli-only road happens to cross over a Palestinian road, Palestinians are then unable to use their own road; they are not permitted to cross over an Israeli road.

*The situation in the Gaza Strip is even worse. Israel controls all the borders, land, sea and air, and permits only a very limited number of imports or exports.

Yet despite these and other unspeakable human rights violations, the U.S. provides Israel with billions and billions of dollars every year. So if Mr. Kerry would like to remove obstacles to Palestinian commerce, perhaps he might want to consider ending U.S. aid to Israel.

As has every recent Secretary of State prior to him, Mr. Kerry is pushing for renewed negotiations, without preconditions. Can anyone tell this writer how that makes sense? Israel is anxious to restart negotiations without any preconditions. Why wouldn't it? Israel takes whatever it wants from Palestine, oppresses the people, bombs them, kills them, destroys their homes, at will, with no accountability.

Why wouldn't Israel want to 'negotiate', with no preconditions? Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can say to the world, managing, somehow, to keep a straight face, that he is willing to return to the bargaining table at any time. Of course, while doing so, he keeps building illegal settlements on Palestinian land, and his IDF terrorists continue to ply their trade on Palestinians.

In order for any two groups to negotiate, each must have something the other wants that can only be obtained by surrendering something the other side wants. Israel has been stealing Palestinian land for over sixty years; Palestine has nothing that Israel wants that Israel can only obtain by giving up something that Palestine wants. Israel has been given free reign, mainly by the United States, although the rest of the world has been complicit in Israel's crimes, to take whatever it wants from Palestine, with complete impunity. Therefore, no negotiations can exist between Israel and Palestine. For Mr. Kerry to suggest that they can demonstrates either his ignorance or his firm conviction in the stupidity of the world community.

But there are signs that the world community is waking up. Palestine's admission as a member state in the United Nations last year, passed by a huge majority, was a giant step. Now the weak, spineless Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas must apply to the International Criminal Court. The U.S., of course, opposes such a move, as it opposed Palestine's admission to the United Nations. One wonders why; if Israel is not guilty of unspeakable crimes against the Palestinians, what does it have to lose if the U.N. investigates? What the U.S. seems to most fear is a loss of financial support from Israeli lobbying groups for individual reelection campaigns. Human rights? The almighty dollar trumps them every time.

Robert Fantina is author of ['Desertion and the American Soldier: 1776 - 2006.'](#)

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